Winter 1960

Venture, Winter 1960

Montana State University (Missoula, Mont.). Students of the University of Montana, Missoula

VENTURE

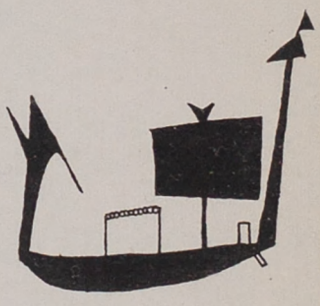

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IMAGE

By JIM POLK

"Look, Andy, your brother is dead and you have nothing now, nothing at all. You're stunned at first, but then all the rage and grief explodes like a dam bursting, you know?" Zink's long, starved arms flopped around like an unstrung puppet, his face gouged out by jerking shadows as he shouted to Andy over the footlights. "Get excited, boy! Look down inside yourself and whip your own emotions into a whirlwind. Act, don't just look pretty!"

Andy wrinkled his forehead, the thick blonde eyebrows arching neatly over wide eyes that gleamed like blue-sheened disks of anthracite coal. He had often tried this same expression in the mirror and knew how nicely it arranged his deep-sculpted features.

"This whole scene has been an abortion," Zink was saying. "Let's go back to Marion's soliloquy and try to get some electricity in this play, you know?"

Andy saw Sheila's narrow silhouette dart through the dull cone of light at the back of the theatre and knew she'd be backstage to talk to him before his entrance. It was flattering to have a girl follow you from Utah to San Francisco without any encouragement, but sometimes Sheila could be a real nuisance.

He left the stage and hurried down the metal steps to the men's lavatory, where the air was damp and bitter and a blistered toilet gurgled uneasily. He turned his best profile to a scummed, cloudy mirror which reflected the bare lightbulb like a magnesium flame.

"Look inside yourself . . . stir up a whirlwind," he murmured, petting his hair so it would gleam like cornsilk. "Your brother is dead and you have nothing now. Nothing at all."

He stared searchingly at the tarnished reflection of his eyes. Then he noticed a pimple on the smooth tan forehead and fingered it warily, his eyes worried. He would have to watch his diet more carefully.

"So here you are." Mike Cole's plain, sunburned face appeared indistinctly in the mirror and Andy jumped. "Sheila was just looking for you. She got a secretary job with an insurance company and she wants to whoop it up in Sausalito tonight."

"A job? She finally got one?"

"Isn't it great?" The skin around Mike's colorless eyes pleated as he smiled. "Now she can afford to get away from that damn warehouse apartment and those fruity beatniks she's been living with."

"That's all right," Andy said thinly.

"She'll meet you in the park at four. She had to run because Lorrie needed the car."

"O.K., Mike. Thanks." Andy smiled professionally.

"You've got yourself a great girl, Andy, me lad," Mike said, kicking open the door. "I'll see you tonight with *el vino!*"

He left and Andy turned to the mirror, staring blankly at the blurred image that faced him.

"Great Girl won't have to go back to Utah after all," he informed the mirror, and the image frowned attractively.

He was late for his cue and Zink threw a coke bottle at him.

Sheila always went to the little park near the Top of the Mark to make stiff, distorted sketches of the fountain. It was usually a serene, organized park, but today a wild seawind sent glittering shudders along the outside hedge and made the bright grass flicker nervously in the sunshine. Dark metal dol-

phins on the fountain spat up powerful sprays, only to have the brilliant drops flung impatiently eastward like weightless glass flakes.

As Andy approached, Sheila looked up from her sketch and smiled.

"Did you hear? Did Mike tell you?" she asked, the joy like syrup in her low voice. "I am a working girl. I don't have to go back to Utah."

"Hey, I'm hot for it," he said, sitting beside her. The wind was burrowing in the thick brown confusion of hair at her neck and rippling the bangs on her pale, waxy forehead. Her face seemed too small for the full, sensitive lips and the odd fox eyes that glistened like agate marbles shot with green. Andy decided she was beautiful, as if he were dispassionately judging a piece of sculpture.

"Hey, remember when we use to drive out on the flats back home and swear to get out and *live?*" She began to sketch in light, jerky strokes, her bare arm white and streamlined. "And those dreary two years at college. Well now we're set. As soon as I get my first paycheck, I'm finding another room. Would you like me to move in with you? We could split the rent?"

"O.K."

"Well, don't go mad with delight. What's wrong, did you have a bad rehearsal this morning?"

"Oh Zink says I don't have enough soul for the part. He wants me to seethe with emotion and I just can't work myself up to it."

"This is not news," she said, with a strange smile that drew her lips tight against her teeth. "You were always rather cold and diffident, darling."

"Darling. What a gooey word." He said it with lazy humor, and was surprised to see the slender cords of her throat muscles go taut. She jumped up, her red skirt ballooning in the wind and the sketch-pad pages crackling electrically.

"You won't give me a thing, will you?" she said tensely. "Not a damn thing."

"So what do you want?" he said, consciously wrinkling his forehead.

She turned and walked stiffly through the tinfoil sheets of water by the fountain, her skirt reflected in quivering shards of red. "I'll see you at eight," she called, not looking back. He watched her vanish through a cut in the glittering hedge, becoming painfully aware of the grinding and clanging of the cable car on the noisy outside street.

The party in Sausalito was held in the small apartment of a ceramic artist Sheila had met at the Tiburon Art Festival. Lean, shaggy figures in jeans and sweatshirts milled through smoke-misted dimness, laughing and talking with low-keyed frenzy, while a sleek negro girl danced out Afro-Cuban rhythms in the corner. Andy absently played chess on the floor with Sheila's roommate Lorrie, a pudgy-faced blonde with hair like a lion's mane. Sheila watched impassively from her perch on the window sill, chewing steadily on the tip of her cigarette holder and parrying Mike Cole's conversation with monosyllables.

At midnight the crowd left for the city and the four of them were alone in the apartment, except for a girl playing oboe in the kitchen. Lorrie's bright voice jangled like a tin bracelet in the stuffy air, and Andy wanted to stuff a cushion in her violet-stained mouth.

"So I said I wouldn't go to bed with just any old sailor," she babbled. "But he had this tattoo of Andrew Carnegie and I figured anyone who would—"

"Oh God, Lorrie, shut up," Sheila snapped, twisting her bangs with a gaunt finger. Andy looked up at her and smiled a handsome, intense smile of understanding, hoping their communication would soothe the vague worry that had weighted his stomach since that afternoon. But Sheila only stared at him until the smile went limp and died, her fox eyes gleaming like worn gold coins.

The mournful oboe drone seemed absurd in the stillness, and Andy suddenly jumped to his feet, throwing a chess piece into the air.

"Im getting the jitters," he said. "Let's take a drive up the coast."

Sheila smiled at him with one corner of her mouth.

"Mike and I have decided to get engaged," she said.

"But Sheil, you didnt tell me!" Lorrie gurgled, rushing to the window sill. "How absolutely divine!"

Mike grinned sheepishly and draped a large, pale arm over Sheila's shoulder, like a clumsy hen mothering her chicks.

"No hard feelings, Andy," he murmured.

(Continued on Page 20)

SPELLDOWN

By CAROLINE CONKLIN

What kept her going during the lonely first weekend in the cottage was her memory of the school room she would return to on Monday. Years ago she had taught in a room like it, a room with boards not a garish shallow green but deeply black, a room with dark lidded desks supported on ornate curls of iron, a room with round warm lights. She decided when she saw it that sometime later, in the spring, she would indulge herself in a real old-fashioned spelldown, with parents invited and home-made cookies.

Now, because it was only her second Monday away from the city, she had to force herself to walk slowly down the unlined empty highway. A rutted dirt road led to the schoolhouse, a red brick box which she found charmingly uncomplicated, set as it was in what she considered a forest of ancient trees. A black car, some foreign model, was parked by the road and as she entered the building she wondered casually which of the teachers had arrived before her.

If she had not been humming, she might not have been so shocked to see a man silhouetted against her classroom windows. As it was, she had recovered her composure by the time he crossed the room and took her hand.

He didn't look like a father. The fathers of her fifth-graders were usually in the self-conscious stages of blond pudginess and thinning hair. This man had the angular body and huge shaggy head of a television sheriff.

"My name is Ted Allen."

"I'm Miss Emerson, Susan Emerson. Won't you sit down."

She indicated her own chair, and he took it, leaving her one of the library stools. That was not typical either; fathers usually insisted on squeezing into a child's desk and hanging their heads. It was an odd sensation, not unpleasant, to have someone look down at her.

"I know who you are," he said, "They tell me you're one of the few excellent teachers in this part of the state."

She had forgotten to put the lights on; his face was in shadow. She said nothing.

"That's why I'm sending Tina to you instead of putting her in a special school or having her taught at home."

So he was a father after all. She felt almost as though he had deliberately cheated her. His Tina was no doubt mentally defective, a big wriggling adolescent, a comic strip student who would turn her into a comic strip teacher. "It is rather late to enter a child this term," she said, in the flat sloping voice with which she impressed blase students.

"I know, and I'm sorry but I only decided yesterday." He frowned down at his folded hands and pounded them gently on her desk. "Tina has never been in school before. When she was six she had polio. Her left leg is useless."

Again the teacher spoke flatly, this time because she was so deeply moved. 'Has she the background for fifth grade work?"

He glanced up. "You are a teacher, aren't you Miss Emerson? Yes, she has the background. Tina is an exceptionally bright little girl; I know because I taught her myself. Study-wise, work-wise, you'll have no trouble at all."

"The child's mother?"

"Dead."

Again she had to overcome a wave of sympathy, and she resented his manner of speaking because it begged for pity by totally rejecting it. She watched him walk to the

window and became aware for the first time that morning of the children in high-pitched play outside.

He said, "We both know that children can be animals toward anyone who is different."

She had a student once, a little Negro girl, who was told to go wash her face every time she tried to make friends, until she stopped trying altogether and just sat on the steps counting cars.

"I thought I had left that in the city."

"I had something like that in mind when I moved out here with Tina. But I have a feeling we were both naive."

She opened her mouth and closed it, suddenly ashamed of herself. If she had taught so long that she expected everyone to speak to her with stammering deference, it was time she stopped teaching. In a softer voice she said, "What would you like me to do, Mr. Allen?"

"I don't want Tina known as teacher's pet, and I'm sure you don't either. But she's going to need some looking after at first."

"You think that I ought to assign her to another child."

"Exactly. Some little girl who is mature, sensitive, respected by the others."

"Sharon," she said. "Sharon Rawley. Shall I call her?"

"Please do."

She stood up quickly. "Miss Emerson, before you call Sharon."

"Yes?" For the first time that morning he was smiling. "I had doubts about bringing Tina here. I don't any more."

The air outside was delicious, and the girls were jumping rope, Sharon turning one end. That was like Sharon. In her teacher's opinion she turned the rope too often, held the fountain for too many friends. But she was prepared to love her for it, just as she had been prepared to love her for the way she sat that first morning, feet flat, hands folded, one braid in front and one braid behind. But she had been wary. She had had little girls who sat like that and then sent chilling comic valentines in February.

That Sharon's eyes had not wavered from her face during the opening speech about being adult and coming to school to learn was not unusual. They all stared the first day, and Miss Emerson had confiscated enough caricatures of herself in twenty years of teaching to know what they saw, a woman solid, tubular, brown-sheathed as a tree. But she was relieved that Sharon was not the first to raise her hand when she asked what they wanted to be when they were grown. Instead it was a plump chesty blonde next to her. "Your name?'

"Nancy Morel. I want to be . . ."

"Please rise, Nancy, when you recite."

"I want to be a nurse so I can help sick people."

"Have you ever helped a sick person, Nancy?"

"No, but."

"Then I suggest you not make too firm a resolve until you have had that experience."

The class giggled, shifted and began to be hers. They didn't know what was funny, but they knew they were not laughing at the teacher. She tried to do this every year; it helped establish her reputation for being tough and knowing the score; and if it was rather hard on Nancy Morel, she had known Nancies before. They recovered quickly.

Sharon was one of the last to raise her hand, and say, "I want to be a teacher."

Many girls wanted to be teachers, girls who had nothing else to say, or girls who wanted to be movie stars and were ashamed to say so, or girls who would get married as soon as they could. But Miss Emerson looked at Sharon, whose blue eyes were slightly crossed like a kitten's, whose teeth might have been straightened if the orthodonist were not so far away, and knew she was as incapable of misrepresenting herself as was the schoolhouse. 'That's nice, Sharon," she said.

By the middle of the week, although they hadn't spoken about anything but classwork, she was as fond of Sharon as she ever allowed herself to become. She liked the way the child stroked the pages of a new book and sniffed the fragrance of a just-sharpened pencil. She liked the child's working so hard that two hours after she came to school her sleek braids were frazzled, the ribbons tied and retied until they looked like strings. She considered inviting her to the cottage after school or on a weekend, and would have if Sharon's eyes had not been so uncritical and full of worship. She didn't know what to say to someone who felt about her as Sharon did.

(Continued on Page 21)

By DOUG BALDWIN

The FISHER

By ALICE ANNE LAROM

Where sundints over the virgin stones
Aflicker found her nosing a stillfin dream . . .
Roil of his big boots breaks
Awash the tree-prints on her trembling element;
Outreeling sings the whip of his line
And plumbs to her side a spinning tin
To tease her to the teasing worm;
And she mounts her flashes to the painbright sun
And she flings her dance in the arc of air
And wriggles in the close palm, dying;
Dying where she gasps on grass he guts her.

What Do You Do About Those Recurrent Dreams, ANYHOW?

By ALAN GODDARD

I go to the cupboard with a missing hinge, and, as natural as everyday, or every night, depending on how you look at it, I open it as if by habit, take out the cracked white cup that used to sit out on the back porch at the ranch for my grandmother's false teeth, and go over to the stove and pour coffee, *ersatz* coffee, and savor its cigarette-acid, early dawn bitterness over my swollen and aching tongue.

It's a beautiful dream.

I finish the coffee, pick up my forbidden book, generally *Modern British Poets*, sometimes John Stuart Mill, occasionally *The House at Pooh Corner*, and go brush my teeth, getting toothpaste foam all over the pages.

I can't stand to look in the mirror, but I do. And there I am, a wavering, blotched face, purple with red circles, pendulous bags under my eyes, a runny nose, and badly disheveled heavy eyebrows. There's no back to my skull. While there's flesh on the back of my hands, I can see the bones, muscles, and nerves all red in the palms. After watching the blood circulating around my hands, I sit down to drink more coffee, read my book, and enjoy the music. The woman who sings it is two tones off a pure contralto. The song is in Italian.

I hear feet marching. It is a heavy-booted, clumping sound. It echoes through the gray streets, and I know it's going to rain. I can stand it no longer. The sound is deafening, and terrorizes my spirit. I rush to the window and look out. But the streets are empty. And except for the sway of the sign across the street, there is no motion. All the windows are closed, and all the vacant rooms across the street. I can see into every room. And there is no furniture in any of them. Just doors that face the windows. I watch them. I wait for them to open. I want to cry as I listen to the music and watch. I can hear the troops marching down the street toward me. Slowly the gleaming brass doorknobs barely begin to turn. I have to run and hide before the doors open. I get under the bed. My hands are all right now, but the bed is no longer covered with the mattress and cheap cotton sheets. There's just the springs and the pillow and a dirty gray piece of blanket. The song starts over again, "Sei il mio cuore", and the doors open across the streets, and orders reverberate as they're barked in the empty rooms. The music is grotesque, and I have to eat my forbidden book. Gas escapes from the stove.

I roll over and turn down the heat on the electric blanket. I reassure myself by looking at my roommate in the next bed. The other day I told him about the execution of the two hundred and fifty teenagers in Hungary. He asked me why I thought about it. What the hell can you do about these recurrent dreams, anyhow.

So the door opens and there stands the magician. He takes off his hat, and three furry bunnies, and flowers fall out. As they hit the garret floor, the flowers bloom in rapid explosions, each blossom brighter than before, almost filling the enormous distance between the magician and me. He asks me if I have any beer. I tell him it's in the refrigerator.

"I see you've been eating John Stuart Mill again," he says.

"Naturally," I answer.

"Do you have an egg for the beer?" he asks.

"Can I have a flower?" I bargain.

"Cows are very nice," he remarks. "So is television. I get a lot of work in television."

I laugh, and ask him what kind of tricks

has he been up to. He produces a glowing light bulb, and says, "I have a bright idea."

"Schoomlaus," I say.

"What the hell is 'schloomlaus'?" he asks.

"Listen to your light bulb," I tell him. "Shut up." He opens the bottle of beer with the light bulb and tells me all about ice, as he nibbles on razor blades. "You'll cut your mouth," I warn him.

"Nonsense. I haven't cut my mouth on razor blades since I practiced walking the tightrope."

"Do you really practice these tricks from childhood?" I ask. Physically this man is very strange. His hands are too long. And one side of his chin looks as if he's been playing the violin for years. But he's as bright and alert as a child, or a bird about to pick up a worm. And I'm curious why he's still wearing his rubbers, and then I remember about the rain; I ask him, "Has it rained yet, out in the gray streets?"

A fountain of sparks erupts from the beer bottle. "It drove them all indoors," he says confidentially. "You can get out from underneath the bed."

"Look." I show him my hands. "My hands are all right."

"That's very nice," he says, "But can you do this?" and promptly sews his fingers up.

"No," I say, "but I can make smoke come out of my ears." I try to show him, but only big bubbles float around the room.

"That's a charming and diverting trick!" and he claps his hands in delight, and the thread falls onto the floor.

"Is this logical?" I ask.

"Is anything these days?" he asks. Just think of all the men who hide under the beds."

"And in elevators," I add, "cautiously going up and down."

"Pure sentiment," he says. "In this time and place, how can you think of people just going up and down in elevators?"

"It's raining," I protest. "Rain in these streets is an awful lot like Bach."

"Oh, go Bach yourself," he snarls.

"Do you think those men in the elevators will ever see their wives again?"

"What do you care?" he declares, pulling a feather-duster out of the breast pocket of his coat and dusting off his knees. "You don't have a wife."

"How can I have a wife?" I tell him. "I never get out of this room." Half a dozen doves float from the end of the feather-duster. They circle idly around the room, torn newspapers blown by the wind. He looks at me, and varicolored tears flow down his cheeks. "Why don't you ever get out of this room?" he asks. His sympathy is real and genuine. I cannot resist answering. I explain my fears. "There are troops marching in the street."

He begins to disappear. But I hear him say, "Beware of false magicians. Illusion is wonderful. It fades. It renews itself." And soon only the varicolored tears remain. I gather up the tears and put them in a box to keep, to count out later, and carefully lay them on the newspaper shreds that had been doves, and crawl under the bed again, hugging the box of tears to my breast, which I got off a Moslem woman in Algiers.

The scissors are very bright on the floor. I pick them up. I cut the tears in half and listen to the ocean, think about the sky-birds and the newspaper-birds, and I begin to walk along the beach and wonder at the soft sand that I leave no prints in. And I watch a thousand planes flame and turn the grey desolation of my horizon red, and watch this desolation slowly go grey like an ash as the planes crash. And I look for the magician in the curling white foam of the sea. I look around and search. Finally, I decide to climb the pyramid, but I can't find it. "Sei il mio cuore", and I shut the window and take my cracked cup, remove my grandmother's teeth, which seem to be smiling at me all the time, hopefully, without lips, without unhappy brown eyes. I pour myself some more coffee, *ersatz* coffee, go over and sit down and pick up my half-eaten *Pooh*-book, and remember the flavor of the beer, the taste of the razor blades, and I look at the varicolored tears rolling around on the floor loose, careful not to step on them, absently nibble at my book and listen to the marching feet.

As a child, I remember sending boats, paper boats, down the creek, hopefully believing that away down the valley, away down the hill, other children might find them and know what I am.

POEMS

By BARBARA KNIGHT

Millionth Fish

I have been the millionth fish
creweled out of deephole Illinois
plummeted twenty feet
below the cool green
of Indiana's forest pool.
No slatterny branches
scraped pine needles
either.
In January, iced at the
fishmarket
I might have watched
mongering pedestrians
shopping up Pike St.
Smelt kipper snacks
or dotted eels slithering
below me.
But crusted buoys
and ice-rimed places
slide away.
The lumpy fisher rising
"See! See! My white fish bait."

The Mountain Eaters

Under leaf-burned skies
against blue spruce
A mountain smokes
with cool fogs
on autumn mornings,
touched by mist hands
and being rubbed with snow
before the year's winds.

Quiet gods,
untrembled
by their mountains' strife,
walk silently in autumn.
The morning
is a splashing bath, and laughing,
they flick molten sun
and ball the clouds
to fling at one another.

A frost that presses crystals
through the snow
has put the gods asleep.
And cradled them
and covered them
in white and grey.
They breathe snow
exhaling black cold by night.

The virile honey
spring released
and furnished to the world
congeals
composed of great ranunculus
and blue haze
spilt down the mountainside.
They wander then,
cracking floods
out of brown canyons
and roaring high spun
into the mad wetness
of April storms.

With a dark end
the fourth season belabors men
and gravidity
is put on them
of musk-clogged afternoons,
the overtone of scented trees
bearing light men to ground.
And this becomes the mountain-eaters cloak.

COUSIN JIM

By MARY CLEARMAN

Jim Abrams crossed the bridge and stood looking up at the buildings that were settled into the fold of hills. Behind them were pines, lowering and rumbling in the faint evening breeze. Closest to him was the unpainted barn, farther away lay the long sheepsheds, their corrugated tin sides catching the last glimmer of sunset, and higher, almost against the trees, was the house, low and dark. A point of yellow light flickered from the front window, and a thread of smoke drifted up to lose itself in the darkening sky.

As he watched, a figure ran out of the house and up into the pines behind it. For a minute he could see the flitting speck of red shirt, and then it was lost in the dusk and the shadows of the trees. As its color disappeared, the traces of ruddiness in the clouds faded. The sky darkened, and the air seemed colder.

A creek, swift and raucous, wound from some source in the hills to pass the barn on its way down the valley. It was bridged with heavy timbers, over which dirt and gravel had been spread, and the upper bank was reinforced with heavy squares of sandstone, held in by rusting lengths of woven wire. The water was darkening with the sky. Jim turned away, shivering in his shirtsleeves, and started up the road for the house, tucking his canvas duffel bag under one arm.

The odor of frying mutton drifted to him, and his stomach flexed in its emptiness. He hurried, climbing the steep steps to the vine-covered porch. It was almost pitch dark underneath the heavy foliage, and he groped a minute for the door, catching the murmur of voices that stopped as he knocked. He caught a glimpse of stacked milk pails and a half-roused gray cat, curled up on a stack, as the light shone from the opened door.

A woman in her twenties stood looking out at him. He saw first her jaw, slowly rotating a wad of chewing gum, and then her eyes, staring emptily over his shoulder and out into the dusk, pale blue and sparsely lashed.

Jim shifted his weight uneasily, letting his bag down on the porch. "Hello, I—"

"Daddy," she called. "It ain't Barney after all."

A man appeared in the doorway behind her, balding and paunchy in soiled work clothes, squinting over a gray-streaked moustache.

"Uncle Vince!" Jim said, relieved at the familiar face. His uncle peered back at him.

"Jim!" he said, recognizing him at last in the yellow light. "You here? Why, I never expected to see you here."

"Well, I—" Jim gestured meaninglessly with his hands, uncomfortable and cold. The ordor of the frying meat was strong through the open door. His uncle, still squinting, swung the door wider and pulled the woman back out of the way. "Come in and sit down, Jim. We are just gettin' a bite to eat."

He followed them into the little, low-ceilinged kitchen. A bare light bulb hung from overhead, casting a harsh light over the squat black range and battered porcelain sink. His stomach tightened, and he glanced at the skillet of chops.

"Lelia, do you remember your cousin Jim?" his uncle was saying. He had returned to the table with its covering of streaked oilcloth, and was leaning on the back of his chair. "We visited him when you and Rachel were little kids, and I saw him again on that trip East two years ago with the sheep."

Lelia smiled at him, her face amiable in its circle of wispy brown hair. Her eyes missed his by several inches, and he remembered for the first time that she was blind. Her jaw circled mechanically over her chewing gum, even as she smiled, and he looked down at the floor and its worn, speckled linoleum.

"Have you eat yet, Jim?" His uncle waved him to a chair at the other end of the table. "Lelia, get Jim a plate. Look like he must've walked out from town."

"I got a lift as far as the fork in the road," Jim said. He sat down in the chair which

his uncle had indicated, then watched the older man seat himself, pulling his chair in until his paunch nestled against the table. Lelia brought them each a plate of mutton and fried potatoes, then carried the tin coffee pot to her father to fill the heavy white cups. She pulled up her own chair, carefully adjusting her blue print skirt around her shanks. Jim looked at her and looked away as she removed her chewing gum and stuck it on the side of her plate.

"We was expecting Barney," she said conversationally. Her voice was high-pitched, with an odd lack of tone. "Barney promised to come up this evening, and I thought it was him when you came."

"Barney Stoddard. Neighbor down the road," his uncle explained. He cut himself a generous bite of meat and paused, looking at Jim with his small, squinted eyes, the meat poised on his fork. "What brings you out here, anyway, Jim?"

Jim hastily swallowed his mouthful of fried potatoes and gravy. "Well, it was really Dad's idea, Uncle Vince." That much was the truth, he thought, looking down at his heavy white earthenware plate, scarred with fine brown cracks in the glaze, and hearing his father's voice booming angrily at him across his polished desk. He felt blood burning through his thin skin, and was thankful for the uneasy light of the kitchen. He had blushed in his father's office, too, squirming on the uncomfortable oak chair, and his father had rocked with laughter, and swung his feet up on his desk. "What's the matter? Don't you recognize your own accomplishments? You might as well capitalize on 'em for once!"

"I could use an extra hand through the summer," his uncle said, breaking through the remembered sounds of his father's guffaws. "Quite a bit around here for Rachel and me to handle alone, you know." He glanced sharply at Jim, squinting, and added, "If it ain't too dirty a work for a college boy. Likely to get those white hands beat up a little."

Lelia, laying down her fork, gave an amiable smile in the general location of his chest, and Jim said hastily, "That would be swell—if you really need help, Uncle Vince, I wouldn't want to put you out—"

"No, no." His uncle took a large bite of bread and washed it down with a gulp of coffee. "I can use you, all right. Glad to have you around, aren't we, Lelia?"

The kitchen door opened with a creak, and Jim turned toward it and then back again at the sound of Lelia's flat voice. "Daddy! Remember what you said!" Her placid face had sharpened, and she pulled the chewing gum loose from her plate and stuck it agressively into her mouth.

Jim's uncle shoved himself heavily back from the table, belching. "Well, Rachel, you get over your tantrum?"

The girl who had come into the kitchen was of medium height and dressed in shapeless castoffs of her father's. She was tanned and hard, with a mop of unkempt dark hair. Jim caught a glimpse of dirt-embedded hands before she noticed his gaze and jammed them into her pockets.

"Daddy, remember what you said," Lelia demanded again.

"That's right, Daddy," Rachel mimicked, looking at Jim. For a minute she said nothing, and he shifted in his chair under her narrow, glinting eyes, then she ended the silence ith a short laugh. "A fair-haired guest for dinner! A new one! Why don't we have the sterling on the table?"

Lelia gave her chair a vicious shove. "This is our cousin Jim Abrams, and you might at least wash, so you don't stink the whole house up with sheep! When Barney comes, he'll—"

Jim felt the blood sting his cheeks again. "That's all right—I don't mind," he muttered uncomfortably. No one was paying any attention. Rachel crossed the room with a slip-slap of dirty moccasins and took a plate from the shelf above the sooty stove. She helped herself to mutton and potatoes and sat down opposite Jim, who watched wordlessly as she ate and drank lukewarm coffee.

His uncle grunted, taking a generous swallow from his own cup. "Least you're a little more sociable than you were a little while ago."

She looked up, and briefly met Jim's eyes. He dropped his, confused, with a burning sense of their brilliant color, and feeling her steady stare until at last she turned back to her plate and finished off the last of her potatoes.

"Daddy, remember!" Lelia was standing in the middle of the floor, her hands aggres-

sively on her prominent hips. "You said she had to behave herself when Barney comes!"

Rachel looked frostily at her sister. "What do you think he can do to me, anyway, doll?"

"Daddy!" wailed Lelia. "She's making fun of me again!"

"Rachel, for God's sake leave her alone," her father said testily. "I'm going to go crazy yet, between the two of you."

Lelia sniffled and sat down again, hunching over her chair. Her blue print dress hung slack from her shoulders, making her appear bosomless. Her father rose and crossed the kitchen heavily, wiping his hands on his trousers.

"Watch how you get your pants all gravy," Rachel said sharply. "I've got enough wash to do in the morning." He turned and eyed her, squinting angrily, then retreated into the inner room. Jim, looking nervously over his shoulder, followed him.

A faded, flowery carpet covered part of the worn pine floor in the front room. A couch was against one wall, sagging and matronly, and a stiff oak piano stood opposite it. Jim went over and looked at the array of pictures on top of the piano. Some were framed, others looked out of cardboard folders, and between them were propped an assortment of snapshots.

His uncle came over and stood beside him. "There's Lelia when she was six, or right in their somewhere." Jim looked at the tinted little girl in the pink plastic frame, curled and vacant-eyed.

"Here's your father's and mother's wedding picture, suppose you've seen it lots of times. And—bet you've never seen this one. This is your dad when he was about your age."

It was an old fashioned photograph, done in shades of brown. The young man stared out at him, wide-eyed and sober, his hair parted neatly.

"Is that from when he was at school?" Jim asked.

His uncle scratched his thigh reflectively. "Umm—sure, must of been about then." He smiled, half dreamily, under his moustache. "Funny how serious he always was. Always took everything so serious." Leaning against the piano, his voice trailed off and his small eyes focused on nothing, as he fingered the photograph in its dusty, elaborate cardboard frame. Jim watched him, yawning a little behind his hand. From the kitchen he could hear the footsteps of the two girls as they cleared the table, the brisk slip-slap of Rachel's moccasins and the slower sound of Lelia's flat oxfords.

His uncle was right, in a way. Even when his father had bellowed with laughter that last day, he had been serious. He supposed that that was the reason they had always disagreed, remembering the series of letters from the Dean, and his father hurrying up on the night train to pace the floor in his room and harangue till morning, to Jim's half-amusement and his roommate's embarrassment.

His father had even been half serious in his suggestion that Jim visit Vince and consider Vince's daughters. "Vince has a pretty good set-up," he had said. "You might try looking the girls over, seeing as that's all you're good for." His mouth twitched now, thinking of Lelia and of Rachel with her tangled hair, remembering the girls he had dated, sleek and groomed if not beautiful. Suddenly, as if before his eyes, he saw the intense, knowing green of Rachel's eyes, and his thoughts scattered.

"Your dad and me pretty much went our own ways after he left the ranch for school," his uncle was saying. Jim blinked, pulling his thoughts together.

"Guess you really didn't have anything in common any more," he murmured.

His uncle nodded. "He made his wad, all right. But I've done pretty well." He glanced complacently around the shabby little room. "Course, we don't have anything fancy. No reason to. But in the bank, where it counts, we look pretty good."

Jim looked again at the row of pictures. There were snapshots of sheep and of groups of people he had never seen, and a number of Lelia, smiling vacantly. In one corner, almost hidden behind a blurred picture of Lelia in a limp cotton dress, was a tinted photograph in a slim gold frame. He stopped and looked, caught by an elusive resemblance. It was a portrait of a girl, her dark hair waved and lips curving faintly. He looked, puzzled, at her serene beauty, trying to establish her connection in his mind. Her narrow, slightly slanted eyes seemed to taunt him with her identity.

(Continued on Page 25)

THE JUG MAN

By MARGE DODGE

UNION

By RAYMOND R. BRUCE

"Foul soul, do you not weary of this world?"
"We come from different worlds, you and I."
(Mmm, that's right. But we come or we
came? And I . . .

I

I, from a world of
Trout-streams in Montana;
Remote, savage, quiet
Except their thrashing roar
or pining wind,
Of nerves drawn taut by a flashing trom-
bone riff,
Of the urge to expand this world beyond
its expanding limits,
Of the urge to crawl back into some
woman's womb,
Of the sorrow in ugliness;
The sorrow
In knowing I may never know
This world, I—
If I could grasp the poles
Or sense the coordinates.

II

I see me on an expanding plain
Of flowing yellow range-grass
And I shout, "It is I!"
And I see me running
Away,
Growing smaller and smaller,
Drowning
Not in water
Nor dust
Nor grass
But in the vast infinity
Of minuteness.

I wait, doubting
And hear, "It is I!"
The plain races past.
She becomes fluid.
Swirling round
Faster,
Slower,
Yellow.
Then
The action freezes
And shatters.

III

The scattered pieces shatter
And depart in disintegration.
Mist whirls and swirls
In slow-motion
Through those corridors of the head.
Still
In the catch-corners of this mind
Condensing fragments collect;
Clotting nebulae
Dry into a crisp structure-work
For an ordered world.
Then
Crushes it
And fades gently
Through the greying rubble
Into crouching darkness.

Yet my mind still conceives.

I turn
and see
An inverted abyss. No—
Better yet:
A reversed abyss.
And what is that?

Not light consuming
Bottomlessness but
Light
Giving Toplessness.

IV

I see me now
but where?
Where in the world am I?
I grow weary; so tired, so tired.
Where shall I go?
Towards the blinding light?
Towards the blinding darkness?
Or must I remain in this greyish ugliness,
Suspended by life
Like the moth,
Waiting like the Jew
And wondering about death?

V

I'm tired of death, of somber tones
Regarding this, of morbid scenes
Surrounding stagnant, seasoned flesh.

A bird sings and a sun shines
And a pulse slows and a
Mind sleeps and
Men are still
born and days, worlds,
Springs, summers, autumns, winters.
They evolve, not die
Why shouldn't I?

. . . but I?)
"Here am I!"

"Here are we!
And the hour, I think,
Is come
To give Him hearing. Is it four o'clock?"

"It is."

"Then go we in to know His embassy."

Remember Next Tuesday

By ANTONETTE GOFFENA

One dreary day I was walking with my brother and my little sister. I wondered why we chose such a dull day for a walk. Maybe it was because Mom had forbidden us to travel along this highway, and today we had the chance to come without her noticing our absence. We walked along this old highway and it seemed abandoned, but the paved surface was still in good condition. It was not long before we came to a turn-off for a gate which opened into a wide, almost flat alfalfa field. Here my brother stopped and pointed at some unusual ruts in the open gateway. My sister and I also stopped and we stared speechlessly at the deep, jagged, ugly ruts. They came straight off the highway and then zig-zagged through the gate and were still part full of muddy water from a recent rain.

Why? I thought, do these ruts look so strange? I have seen many ruts, but these ruts looked different. They looked as though a car out of control had just made them, but there was no car and the highway seemed to be abandoned. It's just my imagination, I thought.

I was still staring at the ruts when my brother shocked me back to reality. "Look! Look at the hill over there!" he exclaimed.

I turned quickly to gaze at the hills which were dark against the dull, cloudy sky. All I could see were the pine-covered hills against the horizon and a little grass-covered hill which bordered the northwest corner of the field. It lay along the pine-covered hill straight across from us. This was the hill at which my brother was pointing. I looked at the hill and then at him and shook my head.

Then I thought I felt something brush against my jacket sleeve. I automatically threw back my head and gasped. It's only the wind, I told myself.

My brother looked at me strangely and said, "What's the matter, sis. You look so pale."

"Oh nothing," I sighed as I shook my head.

Then my brother looked at the hill and down at me and said, "Don't be afraid of the man in the white shirt on the hill." He set his jaw and doubled his fists. "He won't hurt you as long as I'm here."

I looked up at my brother and smiled faintly, and I was about to tell him that I did not see a man on the hill, but when I looked again, I was astounded. Yes, there on the little hill stood a man; and he had on the whitest shirt I had ever seen. It seemed to glow against the darker hill behind him. It looked so strange that I was frightened.

Then I quickly turned my gaze to the left. There was another little hill nearby. On this hill there was a little shack which looked like a gas station, but there were no gas pumps. On the porch a man in a red robe covered with small, black designs, stood facing us. To his right stood a woman dressed in white. It seemed odd because I had not noticed the shack until now. In fact, everything seemed so strange that I suggested to leave as casually as I could.

We had not walked far up the highway when I noticed a dead duck hanging from the barbwire fence which ran parallel to the paved road. It too seemed strange but I tried to convince myself that the duck must have hit the fence and got tangled in it. Yes, it must have flown up and hit the fence, I thought. The river is not far from here.

I do not know how long we walked along the paved road before we came to an old abandoned farm house on a hill. My brother and my little sister wanted to explore it and so to conceal my fears, I followed them. As we entered the house I shuddered with each step because the floors creaked. The house seemed vacant except for one little shelf in one small room. A little brown china horse was lying on the shelf. I slowly walked to the shelf and gingerly picked up the little horse figurine. One hind leg was broken off just above the hoof. That's why it isn't

standing, I thought as I ran my fingers over its smooth, dusty surface. I worked with the horse until I got it to stand. I was so proud of myself that I almost forgot that I was afraid.

When we left the house I looked back at it; and its shabby, gray structure seemed to almost blend into the gray sky. It seemed like we had walked a long time before we came to a big hill. This hill had a gradual slope to it and the highway went over it. We were on top of the hill when my brother suggested that we stop and rest awhile. We stopped near a tall pine tree that was not far from the highway.

The day was still dreary and I wondered about the man in the white shirt. I wished that I was as calm as my little sister seemed to be. Somehow her calmness comforted me.

We were not on the hill very long before I saw a young man coming toward us. He had a shock of blond hair and was dressed in a brown leather jacket and faded blue jeans. Under his jacket he wore a white shirt. He stopped near me and he smiled as his blue eyes met my gaze. He kept his eyes on me and it made me feel uneasy. He stared at me as though I were his and no one had better harm me. I wanted to run and hide behind the tree but I could not.

Then the young man stepped so close to me that he had to stare down at me with his deep blue eyes. His fine-featured, handsome face still showed the tan from the summer before, and a lock of his wavy blond hair fell on his forehead. His jaw was set and his lips were pressed tight until he opened them and softly said, "You look just like her. You have her long, dark hair, her violet eyes; her light skin and her fine features; but you are taller and your eyes seem to sparkle. You smile more and you aren't sophisticated like she was."

"Like who?" I asked automatically as I tilted my head slightly to one side.

He frowned at me and replied, "Like your mother."

Then he shifted his weight and pulled his hands out of his pockets. "Terrie," he said, "I have come to warn you to stay away from Bill Henderson."

Bill Henderson, I thought, he's just a new boy I started going with. Sure his father has lots of money, but I have no intention of including him in my plans. As far as I am concerned Bill seems like a very nice kid.

Then I heard the stranger say, "You must be here next Tuesday and you must know who was involved in my accident." He stressed the word accident and sneered.

"Accident?" I heard my voice crack the silence.

"Yes, the accident which killed me twenty years ago today. Your mom was eighteen then and I loved her, but she loved another. She loved him so much, but he did not love her. Why, he was so low he left town with another woman on their wedding day." After he said this he set his jaw and doubled his fists but kept them at his sides. "Then she met your father and they were married," he began after the pause. "He's a good man, but she can't really love him." He looked down a moment before he looked at me again and added, "She still blames herself for my death. That's why you must not mention this walk to your mother. I've made her suffer enough."

"D-do you still love her?" I stammered.

He glanced away and quickly replied, "Yes, but it's not the same."

He sounded almost angry and his face seemed to flush as he lowered his eyes for a moment. Then he looked up at me again and said, "She couldn't see marrying a poor country boy who liked to hunt ducks and loved horses." He paused before he softly added, "You see, Terrie, I followed you here. That house you were in was where I lived and that china horse was my favorite after my real one died. The china one looks just like her."

Now the stranger seemed to be staring right through me. I spoke quickly and my lower lip trembled. "I-I see. You were . . ."

Then his eyes focused and he nodded. "Yes, I was on the hill and I had to touch you before you could see me."

"And those people?"

He paused before he replied, "They were the only ones who saw it happen. The woman still blames herself for killing me, but the man really killed me." The stranger looked down and scraped some pine needles with the side of his foot. Then he looked up quickly and added, "Yes, the ruts are mine. I was very angry that day because he was showing off your mother in his fancy new car. Sure his dad was rich, but I had to work hard for

(Continued on Page 28)

Image . . .

(Continued from Page 3)

"We didn't have a chance, Andy. Really how could I have expected any warmth from you, when it was all going to that Roman profile." Sheila's mouth was a marble carving, but her throat muscles convulsed spasmodically and her eyes glistened with bright points of light. "I can't go on admiring and adoring without getting anything in return, Andy. I'm just not rugged enough for unrequited love."

"You . . . he's not . . . Mike isn't . . ." Andy was surprised at the stammering, because his insides felt remote and cold.

"Look, let's not talk about it now," Sheila said dully. "I want to drive slowly along the ocean and know the man sitting next to me is glancing at *my face*, not the reflection of his own in the rear-view mirror."

Andy searched his memory for an appropriate remark, then looked down at the chess piece in his hand and in one smooth movement placed it on the linoleum floor. He crossed to the kitchen door to tell the oboist to shut up, wondering if his movements looked as mechanical as they felt. He might have been methodically following memorized stage directions in a play.

"Andy, would you tell me something," Sheila said. "Are you hurt?"

She was watching him from the window, her skin taut in a bitter, painful smile, and Andy heard Zink telling him "Look inside yourself . . . stir up a whirlwind." He looked at Sheila blankly, then glanced at Mike's doughy face and Lorrie's lion mane. There was nothing. He had never felt so empty. He had an idiotic impulse to pound on his chest to see if it would give off a hollow sound.

"Well?" Sheila said hoarsely.

Andy turned and walked out of the apartment, shuffling speedily down the narrow staircase to the dark shadows of the waterfront road. The wind had disintegrated to a sickly breeze that rustled in the canvas sails and cables of ghostly boats and brushed dents in the black, moon-bitten water. His shoes clicked along the empty sidewalk as he glanced at the blind facades of the art shops.

He was stopped short by the sight of a large store window glazed bright silver by the light of a street lamp and neatly etched with a three-quarters-length reflection of himself. He approached it slowly, fascinated by the obscene growth of the vision, then stopped to examine it. A cold wave of sickness hit his stomach, and he went dizzy as he kicked the image into sharp, glittering pieces.

Poem

By ELLA ORTNER

My thoughts are
many-sided flecks of dust
reflecting in the slanting rays
of light through little-used windows
in a room whose walls
are hung with dusty draperies
and on whose rafters
sit silent, mirthless ghosts.

Spelldown . . .

(Continued from Page 5)

But now, after she had called Sharon who handed the rope to Nancy and came running, she began to wonder if she had chosen the right way to show her regard for the child. She was not the mature, respected girl Mr. Allen had asked for. What Sharon knew of the world she had read about and story book worlds were done in black and white colors and neatly spaced black and white print.

"It won't be jump rope weather long, will it, Sharon?"

"No, but anyway I love it to snow."

She was hesitating before her own door, wondering if it would be possible to change her mind now without hurting Sharon's feelings, when Mr. Allen stepped out and it was too late. Startled, she held Sharon's shoulder and said, 'This is Mr. Allen, Sharon. He wants you to take special care of a child who is coming to be with us, a child handicapped by polio."

But Sharon did not understand, and before she could explain, Mr. Allen had taken the child's hand and was leading her into the classroom. The teacher followed.

"You're a very pretty girl, did you know that?" Even crouched down before Sharon, he was taller than she. "I want you to do me a big favor. I want you to show my daughter how to do things your way. You see, she's on crutches and everything is hard for her."

Sharon thrust her head forward and drew her lower lip between her teeth, dumb with eagerness and pleasure. Miss Emerson was embarrassed for her, and angry with him when he said, "If you'll do it for me, one day soon the three of us will go to the city and see a movie and buy some ice cream."

"That won't be necessary, Mr. Allen," she said. "Sharon will be delighted to help in any way she can. Now if you will stop by in a couple of weeks, we can discuss Tina's progress."

"Tina is in the car now."

She had completely forgotten that there was a Tina. "Of course. Why don't you bring her in, it's almost time for the bell."

In spite of herself she shivered at the dead measured thump of the approaching crutches, and for the first time she flushed under Sharon's gaze. "Tina will need a front seat by the wall, Sharon, so that her crutches won't block an aisle. I want you to sit near her."

Mr. Allen stayed for a few minutes after the bell rang to talk about Tina to the class. He spoke well and they listened; he would have made a good teacher. She said when he had left, "Arithmetic books, please," as always, and added, "Sharon will help Tina."

The class was gone from her that day, gone from each other, and she knew it was not just because of a new student and a changed seating arrangement. The fierce struggle each child was having with his conscience was almost visible. Not that she could blame them. Tina, sitting curled over her desk, was an unlovely child. Everything about her was limp, her dull orange hair, her open mouth, even her thin white arms. Once Sharon caught her looking at Tina and, misinterpreting, created such a warm triangle of love with her smile that for the second time that morning Miss Emerson was embarrassed.

They didn't get used to Tina, even though she seldom talked and never laughed. The children shuffled guiltily out for recess each day; they held doors for her without looking. Sharon treated her like a doll that walked, but had to be led, sitting by her at lunch, nominating her for class offices, whispering "Wait for Tina" so incessantly that it was not Sharon who drew Tina into things but Tina who drew Sharon out. They sat together on the back steps, Sharon's shoulders hunched in sympathy, and talked.

She could hear them through the window, and at first was unable to work because of the painfully tense silences. But apparently Sharon realized that she would have to do the talking, because the teacher began to hear soliloquies, rhythmic, soft and selfless as lullabies.

"You weren't here when Miss Emerson asked us what we wanted to be. What do you want to be? You could be a teacher. I'm going to. I'm going to teach Engish. What are you going to teach? You could teach geography, you're good in that. Or, you could teach kindergarten, all the little children. Or, if you don't want to be a teacher you can be a lot of other things. you could be a singer or a secretary or a telephone operator or write poems."

Miss Emerson smiled when she heard that; she had spent too many hours trying to impress upon Tina the meaning of a new word

or the significance of a chapter in her history book. What surprised her was how well Tina knew what she had come to the school knowing. She wondered what techniques Mr. Allen had used, and she finally decided to allow him to help again. Instead of saying "Tina is doing well" when he came for his biweekly conference she said, "Tina could use some help in spelling" or "history" or "arithmetic." He would nod without smiling, ask to see the place in the book, they would lean over it together and sometimes their shoulders touched.

The day she caught Tina copying answers from the back of her book, during an arithmetic test, she was not very surprised. But she was disconcerted to look up and meet the knowing eyes of five or six other children. It must have been going on for some time now. She decided to wait and see, not realizing until later that it never occurred to her to pounce on Tina the way she always before had pounced on a child who cheated.

The next day it was a piece of paper folded in Tina's hand and two days later it was glancing across the aisle. Now that the children knew she knew, there was a general slumping all over the room. Three boys sitting together cheated on a spelling test; she punished them less severely than usual. She was unable to sleep the night before Mr. Allen's next conference, but he seemed to be in a hurry and she did not bring the matter up.

She might never have done so at all, except for a conversation between Nancy and Sharon which took place outside her window on an unusually warm day in March. Tina had come in to use the toilet, and Nancy took advantage of her absence to ask Sharon to come play Red Rover. Sharon refused.

"I don't see why you have to stick around that old Tina," Nancy said, and the teacher thought her voice was about as pleasant as a foot scraping gravel.

"If you knew her you wouldn't talk about her like that."

"Well, she spoils everything. We don't even stand up to recite any more."

"You said you didn't like to stand up."

"I don't, but . . . she doesn't even look at anybody when she talks to them."

"That's because she doesn't want you to look at her." Miss Emerson was amazed. It was probably true. Why had it never ocurred to her? But Nancy said, "No wonder. That leg looks like a skeleton."

"You shouldn't think about her leg."

"Okay, but I don't like her."

"You don't even know her, Sharon said patiently. "You should try especially hard to like her because of her leg."

"If I'm not supposed to think about her leg, why should I like her because of her leg?"

There was a very long silence, and it was not Sharon who broke it, but Nancy. "Anyhow, Tina cheats."

Sharon gasped. "She doesn't!"

"Tina cheats! Tina cheats!"

The teacher was furious, she would have gone out and slapped Nancy's mouth if she had not been so certain that it was her own fault. Mr. Allen, not Sharon, should have been the first to hear.

She pretended not to know that Sharon had run in and was standing just inside the door, but stared down at the paper she was correcting and tried to think of something to say. To most children cheating was a minor offense like crying in class. It was letting school get you and it was babyish. Sharon was different. Sharon would no more consider cheating than she would consider burning down the school house.

When she finally looked up Sharon was leaving the room. Her shoulder hit against the door frame.

It was this picture that the teacher carried in her mind when Mr. Allen came again. Before he could speak she said, "I regret to tell you that Tina does not do her own work."

He had been going to shake her hand; he stood awkwardly arrested in mid-gesture for a moment and then said, "Beg pardon?"

"Tina copies from other papers, looks at

the answers in her book. That's clear enough, I'm sure."

He dropped into one of the children's desks and leaned on it, one clenched fist pressed against his mouth. She looked at tomorrow's homework assignment written on the blackboard and said nothing.

When he muttered something she caught only the word "mother." After a moment he raised his big head and looked at her. "Tina's mother died of polio when Tina was crippled. She could have taught her these things."

The carefully prepared words left her mind and she was angry. Why did he have to tell her now? She looked out the window trying to remember what she had been going to say. Something about Sharon.

"Will you let me handle this, Miss Emerson?"

"On the contrary, I wish your permission to speak to Tina myself."

She heard him move, but didn't realize what was happening until he was behind her, his hands on her shoulders, turning her around. "To Tina, studies mean everything because she is lonely. I think you and I understand loneliness, Susan."

The situation was ludicrous; she felt like a fool as she backed away from him. "I don't think you realize what this is doing to discipline in my room. The other children see Tina, see what she is doing, and see she is getting away with it. It was only for your sake, for Tina's sake that is, that I have deferred speaking to her until now." She heard herself rambling on and on and knew she had lost.

He knew too. "I'm sure you can keep discipline, Miss Emerson, no matter what Tina does."

Angry with him, angry with herself, she said, "Very well, but I must insist that you speak to her tonight."

"Of course." He smiled. "Thank you."

She watched him leave, filling the doorway with his body, and remembered Sharon for the first time.

Tina's cheating, while it did not stop, seemed to become more furtive. The teacher inferred from this that her father had spoken to her, and that if she tried to say anything she would only do damage. She decided to wait a few weeks, and if it continued, speak to Mr. Allen again. Meanwhile there was the distraction of the spelldown.

The girls, at least, were as excited as she. Some had wanted to wear old fashioned costumes, but they had been persuaded by the groaning boys to settle for their good dresses. Several had volunteered to bring cookies. The boys scoffed, but she noticed that for a week in advance only one or two spellers were still in the desks after school.

The parents weren't to arrive until one, but those children who lived too far to go home at noon wore their party clothes in the morning; the room rustled with taffeta and billowed with organdy. Since they usually had spelling at eleven, she gave them the hour before lunch to practice aloud to themselves.

Absorbed in making a list of words, she paid no attention to what was going on until she heard a strange high laugh. It was Tina. Tina, in a too-long green dress, and Sharon, in butter yellow, were included in the group.

The teacher gave silent thanks and did not move for fear of disturbing them or making someone self-conscious. She told herself that she need not have worried, it had simply taken time, that no one adjusted easily to something new, and she decided against speaking to Mr. Allen again about Tina's cheating. As she watched them, it occurred to her that he must have chosen the green dress and the hair ribbon that almost matched. She smiled, fingering the leaf pin, real gold, which she wore on her new beige suit.

After lunch the boys brought in extra chairs and moved her desk over to the side. It was so cloudy that lights had to be turned on, drawing the room together as a fireplace does, and the air was fragrant with cookies, still warm and bending. More than half of the mothers came, and she greeted them almost effusively, waving to each one. Mr. Allen, the only father, seemed not at all embarrassed. He gallantly refused to take a seat even though there were several left over, standing against the back board, hand laid on hand. "Line up, please," she said. "John, 'handful'."

At first each time a boy went down shrugging on a word like 'separate' a mother rustled and whispered something apologetic to the mother beside her. But when the words be-

came harder and the line dwindled, the rustling and apologies stopped. When there were only three left, Nancy, Sharon and Tina, the tension was so high it seemed to generate heat. Miss Emerson was glad for Mr. Allen's sake that Tina had managed to stay up so long, she had, in fact, given her more obvious words where a choice was possible. Now that only three were left she would no longer favor Tina, of course; she had perhaps already overdone it.

"Nancy, idiosyncrasy."

"Idiosyncrasy. i d i o s i n c r a c y."

"Tina, idiosyncrasy."

Tina spelled it, and Nancy went down. The teacher smiled at her, but when she looked up to nod at Tina she noticed Sharon, who for once was not encouraging Tina but standing tall and apart. The teacher was suddenly uneasy, as she followed Sharon's eyes to Mr. Allen. Was the child so eager to impress him as all that? What a shame, Miss Emerson thought, that Sharon's mother hadn't been able to come.

The mothers began whispering, recalling her to the spelling words. Before she could call the next one, someone said, "Doesn't the little red-haired one want a chair?"

"No, no," Mr. Allen said heartily. "She's just fine."

At his words, sympathy, which had been divided, went to Tina.

"Sharon, excruciate."

"Excruciate, e x c r u c i a t e."

"Tina, parliament."

"Parliament, p a r l i a m e n t."

There was no sound in the room but for her voice and the higher echoing voices of the two girls. The room was too hot even with the door open. She began to be afraid it would never end, that they would have to end on a tie.

"Sharon, illuminate."

"I l l u m e n a t e."

Breaths caught all over the room assured her that she had heard right. "Tina, illuminate."

I l" she paused, mothers leaned forward in their chairs "l u m" Again she paused, now no one was breathing. "i n a t e."

"Correct."

Voices rose, and applause like dropped beads. Miss Emerson was about to ask for help serving the refreshments when she caught sight of Sharon's face. Chilled, she half rose from her seat.

"You cheated, Tina Allen."

The noise ceased like a shut off radio and then began again louder than before as mothers hurriedly put on their children's coats, said thank you in her direction and left, careful not to glance at the plates of cookies. Then there were just the four of them standing like actors waiting for a curtain.

She stared at Sharon, expecting her to run to one of them crying and begging forgiveness, wondering which one it would be. Instead Tina moved first, thumping to stand in front of her father whose arms closed over her shoulders.

"You cheated, Tina."

Tina said, "You lie."

"You must have imagined it," Mr. Allen said. "You disappoint me, Sharon." He smiled.

Sharon turned only her head; she looked uncomfortably twisted standing that way. "Miss Emerson, you saw? It was 'illuminate' two l's and so he went" two fingers to her white mouth "then an i is he went" one finger to her kitten eyes. "You saw?"

Miss Emerson looked down at the book on her desk, tracing the word on the cover S-P-E-L- "I didn't see, Sharon. If you thought you saw anything like that, you really ought to have told me privately."

It was the truth after all. She smiled at Mr. Allen who was fitting Tina's limp arms, one at a time, into the sleeves of her coat. Soon he would smile back at her and then they would all talk calmly and no one's feelings would be hurt. She was so sure of this that she could hardly realize what had happened until he was out the door, Tina, crutches and all, in his arms.

Sharon had put on her coat, had gathered her books, and was leaving too. "Sharon."

She stopped as though grabbed by the arm. Without turning around she said, "I'm sorry. I guess I imagined it."

Then she was gone.

Naked Eyes

By SONIA TETLIE

Naked eyes that hide not love
and to the one who sees inside
the ember light is pain,
the pain of wind that fans a spark,
the pain of time to burn and fade,
the pain of rain that turns the
still warm coals
to mud.

Cousin Jim . . .

(Continued from Page 14)

"That's Rachel when she graduated from high school," his uncle said from behind him. "She—"

His voice went on, while Jim stared at the photograph, trying to associate it with the wildhaired Rachel he had seen. The eyes were the same, he realized, deep and knowing, a little cynical, under their bright color.

"She doesn't seem to have—have wanted to go to school," he said slowly.

His uncle glanced over his shoulder, almost airily, toward the kitchen door. "Oh, I wouldn't be surprised but what she'll decide to go on one of these days. You never know what she'll do. Lelia's the steady one."

"Seems to be," Jim said absently, still absorbed with the picture.

"Too bad about her being blind, but it came from a fever when she was little. Nothing that runs in the family, you see. And she gets around the house fine, does what of the work she can—"

"What?"

"I say, just because she's blind don't mean her kids'll be blind. It came from a fever, and not from something in the family. And she's as good around the house as you can expect."

"I see," Jim said uneasily, trying to think of a tactful change of subject. He was saved by Rachel's entrance from the kitchen. She passed the piano and played an arpeggio with her left hand, followed by a major fifth, then crossed to the couch and sat down, swinging a leg over the arm. Her father turned and frowned at her.

"You used to play some nice songs, instead of just banging around."

She ran a hand through her hair, watching Jim under the shadow of tangled curls. "Barney's here," she said.

"Barney here!" Her father broke off from his scolding. "Why didn't you say so? Where is he?"

Rachel shrugged, her lower lip protruding a little, scornfully examining her fingernails. Her father's question was answered by the entrance of a brown, middle-aged man, stockily built, but below middle height. Lelia was close on his heels.

"This is Barney Stoddard, Jim," his uncle said. "Barney, this is Jim Abrams, my nephew."

Jim took the offered hand, seeing it hard and dark against his own, and looked into the square, lined face with its curiously light, watchful eyes. "How do you do—"

Barney's light, darkrimmed eyes flicked over his face. "How do you do," he said. His voice was quiet, educated, and Jim caught the trace of Eastern Seaboard that clung about the words.

Lelia interposed herself, arching her chest toward Barney. "Jim gave me such a surprise when he came this evening. I went hurrying to the door, thinking it was you come early, but here it was Jim."

"I can imagine," Barney said tactfully. Jim, watching, saw his eyes go to Rachel briefly, and saw Rachel's face with the cynicism drained away.

Jim's uncle had come up and was standing behind Barney and Lelia, a benevolent hand on each of their shoulders. "Haven't seen much of you lately, Barney," he said. "Been keeping yourself busy?"

"Pretty busy," Barney said evasively, stepping out from under the fatherly arm and wandering toward the piano.

"Too busy to come see me?" Lelia pouted brazenly. Jim felt his own sensitive skin burn, looking from the grotesque playfulness on Lelia's face to Barney, who had turned away. Rachel burst into a fit of coughing and disappeared into the kitchen.

Barney tapped absently at a piano key,

then turned back to Jim's uncle. "Lost any lambs recently?"

"Don't think so." He looked a little surprised at the turn of conversation. "Why?"

"I've been hearing coyotes lately."

"Coyotes!"

"I could hear them plain when I came up tonight, yammering away for all they were worth."

Jim's uncle growled, heading for the door.

POEM

By MARY MORRIS

Handmaidens whose shoulder's slant
Perforce imitates the night's fault,
Have felt their music heave;
Weighing its admonishment,
They spray their voices out through
Stopped white spokes, they lean out
And are returned from starless,
  undiminished night,
Their modest fingers lonely and unmaimed.

"Didn't think there was a coyote left around here."

"I could certainly hear them," Barney said, following him. "Maybe they're still going at it."

"Ever hear a coyote, Jim?" His uncle paused in the doorway before going on. "Come along."

They trooped through the kitchen and out on the porch. Jim took a deep breath as the cold air hit his face, realizing how close the house had been, and catching the faint odors of the night; the freshness of the vine overhead, with the whispering of its leaves, a trace of turpentine from the pines above the house, and close to him, the half-veiled sourness of Lelia's breath. Below them he could hear the sound of the creek, and far downstream an owl called out.

"I don't hear anything," his uncle began, and then his words were cut across by a faraway yip. It grew louder, and was answered by a nearer voice, and then another, until the elusive yammering seemed to shimmer all around them, ebbing and pulsing back, as much a part of the night as the black shadows that were the sheepsheds. Jim heard his uncle swearing, leaning against the porch rail with Lelia slumping beside him, and then heard voices behind him, low in the darkness.

Barney Stoddard was talking, his words barely audible under the yammering of the coyotes. "Have they been pretty rough on you?"

Rachel murmured in reply, her words blotted out by an explosion from her father—"Damn those coyotes! They'll be grabbing every lamb I own!" The end of Barney's next sentence emerged behind him.

"—if you'd just buck up, go back to school. He'll give you the money, won't he?"

"Oh, I suppose so, but—" Her voice was again lost to Jim under a vigorous curse from his uncle, and he caught only the last words. "—where would I be then? Back here to herd sheep and baby-sit Lelia?"

Barney said something, and her voice rose a little in answer. "No, I'm not getting married for a way out! Not to you and not to anybody else!"

"Hush! Your dad'll hear you!" The words

became indistinct, cautiously lowered and hurried. Jim caught only fragments, "—least get out of here for a few years—" "make no difference, end up here anyway—" and then he heard Barney say,

"What's with your fair-haired cousin?"

Jim's uncle stalked back to them. "Come on, lets go in! I've heard enough coyotes for one night."

Rachel's answer was a soft laugh. "Sweet little thing, isn't he?"

"I suppose so. For some ungodly reason."

"Next candidate for Lelia's hand?"

They followed him into the house. Jim trailed behind, shivering. Anger at Rachel was slowly building, and when Lelia brushed against him, her jaw munching automatically, he winced. He glowered at the unobserving Rachel. Who was she to dismiss him as a sweet little thing? Next candidate for Lelia's hand? She could at least comb her hair, he thought, and at the same instant found his eyes lingering on the long line of her legs. He struggled against his bubbling emotions. Rachel's voice was in his ears. "—where would I be then? Make no difference, end up here anyway—". Thoughts of his own school days came back in a nostalgic flood.

Lelia interrupted his thoughts. He looked down to find her standing near him, her blank eyes turned toward him. "Cat got your tongue, Cousin Jim?" A thin stream of saliva trickled from the corner of her mouth, and she wiped it away with the back of her hand.

"What did you say?" he asked.

"I said, do you think you'll be staying with us long?"

He looked at her, at the kittenish smile that parted her pale, chapped lips, the oversized blue print dress on her faded body, and at her legs, white and dotted with pale, sparse hairs. For a minute he stood staring, and then Rachel's laugh came to him, low and bitter, and his mind tumbled in panic. He bolted through the kitchen door and off the porch, taking the steps in two wild leaps. He could hear excited voices behind him as he raced down the road and across the bridge, but he was well past the barn and almost out of sight of the lights of the house when he stopped, gasping from exertion. It was only then, doubled up and gulping great draughts of cold air, that he remembered his duffel bag in the kitchen, and the long walk to town.

Centrifugal Force

By JANE K. WYNN

Caught in the cog
One aspires to flee this radial grasp
And traverse the labyrinth of concentric maze
Only to stumble in the zone of transition.

Mobility versus ascribed
This we challenge
Too long we intrude and linger
Only again to be found and sucked back
Into the vacuum.

Remember Next Tuesday

(Continued from Page 19)

my little secondhand sports car. It was all I could afford." His face was flushed again and his fists were doubled at his sides; and I believe if he were living and if that man were here, he would have tried to kill him. An instant later he relaxed his facial muscles and those in his arms. Then he spoke softly again. "After I saw them I drove away from the high school as fast as I could down this very highway." He paused before he added, "It was no accident." I thought his muscles were going to tighten again but he remained relaxed. "He followed me and forced me off the road at the gate. I was a fool for driving so fast." He gently shook his head and added, "I learned too late." Then he leaned closer to me and almost whispered, "Those ruts are ugly, aren't they, Terrie? Don't follow them and get your neck broken like I did."

I did not understand but I knew he was not telling me everything and I was afraid to ask questions. I lowered my gaze and I pitied him. The gate, I thought. It must have been shut when he hit it. I wanted to cry but I did not want him to see me cry.

He seemed to read my mind because he put his hand on my shoulder and softly said, "Don't pity me. It's best this way because your mother would have never loved me." Then he stepped back and stared at me again. This time his eyes seemed to flash. "But remember," he warned, "to stay away from Bill Henderson. He'll only bring you trouble and unhappiness." He stressed the last two words.

His voice seemed to ring in my ears. To avoid his stare I quickly turned my head, and I saw a man with a dark beard walk by. He was dressed in white. I was sure he heard the stranger speak harshly to me. Now I would have three witnesses, I thought. But the man walked by without even turning his head. I wanted to call to him, but my voice stuck in my throat. I turned to see where my brother and sister were. They were standing under the tree beside each other, and they gazed at me quizzically.

Then something light touched my shoulder. I shuddered and turned quickly and met the stranger's gaze again. "Don't worry," he said, "I won't hurt you." He paused before he added, "That man you just saw watches over you everyday, and he is here to help you too."

I felt my mouth open and before I could say anything, the stranger nodded his head toward my brother and sister and said, "They can't hear everything I say, but they will help you too."

The stranger stepped very close to me and he leaned forward and almost whispered, "Remember next Tuesday." He stared down at me for a moment before he took me into his arms and pressed his lips to mine. I immediately wanted to struggle free, but his kiss was light and I relaxed in his arms. His kiss seemed long and passionate and I found myself liking it. No boy had ever kissed me like this before.

I realized that he loved and wanted to protect me because of Mom, and this was the way he would have kissed Mom if she had given him the chance.

It was not until he released me that I realized I was so frightened I was trembling. How can he be dead, I thought. He seems so real but yet he does not. He must be here only to help me not to take me away. Oh, what shall I do, I wanted to shout.

"Don't be frightened," he said calmly, "you'll be all right if you remember to come here next Tuesday and to do what I have already told you." Then he smiled and walked away.

I looked down for an instant. "But how can I find out about it if I don't ask Mother," I shouted after him. It was no use because he was gone.

"You can try the courthouse or the tribune office," I heard my brother say as he quickly stepped beside me. Then he put one of his strong arms around my waist and added, "Sure we'll help you."

My little sister held one of my hands when she looked up at me and smiled as she bravely said, "I'm going to help too. We'll even come here with you next Tuesday."

About the Authors . . .

Raymond Bruce, a sophomore in English from Helena, recently spent a year studying at the University of Heidelberg. Mr. Bruce's poem, "Union," is his first contribution to Venture.

Mary Clearman has been a regular contributor to Venture for two years. She is a junior in creative writing.

Caroline Conklin's story, "Simply Lateral," appeared in the fall issue of Venture. She is a graduate of Radcliffe and a special student at MSU.

Alan Goddard is a senior in English and the author of numerous articles, stories, and poems that Venture has published in the past.

Antonette Goffena, a sophomore from Delphi, Montana, is the author of "Remember Next Tuesday." It is her first publication in Venture.

Barbara Knight is a graduate student in English from Billings. Her poem, "Central Ave., Los Angeles," was published in the fall issue of Venture. As an undergraduate, Miss Knight has been the winner of two Sterns short story awards.

Alice Ann Larom is from Missoula and a graduate student in English. As an undergraduate, Mrs. Larom was both a staff member and contributor to Venture.

Paul Lerner is Venture's art editor for this issue. A senior in Anthropology, Mr. Lerner is from Brooklyn. Drawings of his were published in the Fall issue of Venture, 1958.

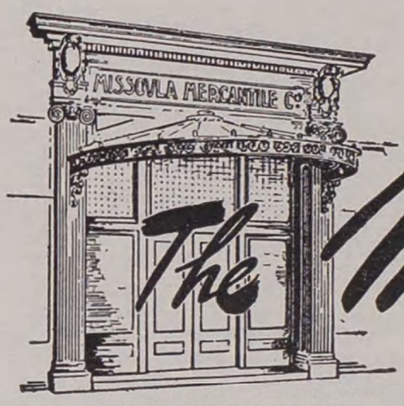
Mary Morris was Venture's art editor last fall, and is a senior in English from Missoula. Miss Morris has contributed several poems and stories in addition to her art work.

Ella Ortner is a teacher in MSU's School of Education as well as a special student in English. Mrs. Ortner's poem in this issue is her initial contribution to Venture.

James Polk is a frequent contributor to Venture and a junior in English. Last year Mr. Polk's play, "A Message From Space," placed first in the Masquer One-Act Play Contest.

Sonia Tetlie, a graduate student in Psychology from Big Timber, has presented a poem, "Naked Eyes," for her first appearance in Venture.

Jane K. Wynn, from Cleveland, Ohio, is a sophomore in Journalism. Her poem, "Centrifugal Force," is her first contribution to Venture.



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